

February 27, 2001

The Honorable Thomas M. Middleton, Chair
Senate Budget & Taxation Subcommittee
on Capital Budget
Presidential Wing, James Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

Dear Chairperson Middleton:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Council I want to express our strong desire that the Maryland Department of Transportation complete the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Georgetown Branch Light Rail/Trail project between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Furthermore, we urge that the State proceed with funding the final design and land acquisition of this project as expeditiously as possible.

Several times over the past decade we have shown that our master-planned project—which calls for a largely single-tracked light rail line (with four double-track sections) and a parallel hiker-biker trail—is among the most cost-effective rail lines yet developed in Maryland, and is perhaps *the* most cost-effective.

- In 1991 an analysis of all potential rail lines in Maryland showed the Georgetown Branch project to be the most cost-effective in the state.
- In 1993 the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments judged the Georgetown Branch project to be the only promising circumferential rail link in the Washington area.
- In 1996 the Mass Transit Administration completed its Georgetown Branch Draft Environmental Impact Study, demonstrating better cost-effectiveness than some other rail lines in the State that have since been advanced.
- In 2000 the MTA, at the direction of the General Assembly, studied this line and found that the County's master-planned design for the Georgetown Branch was demonstrably more cost-effective than double-tracking it, undergrounding it, or moving it off the master-planned alignment.
- In 2001 the ongoing Purple Line studies are showing once again that the Georgetown Branch between Bethesda and Silver Spring is among the most cost-effective potential rail links in the Washington Metropolitan Area.

The Georgetown Branch project remains the Council's highest priority for expansion to our (and the region's) rail transit system. If the Committee or any of its members wish to explore this matter in more detail when you have the time, we would be happy to do so.

Sincerely,

Blair G. Ewing
Council President

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cc: Members of the Senate budget & Taxation Subcommittee on Capital Budget